

CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

THE STATE

OF

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AT

THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

1796.

Si vobis in animo est tueri mœnia vestra, nec pati hæc omnia GALLIAM fieri—me sequimini.

Tit. Liv. B. 5. c. 47.

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would deride or abandon it.—Founded upon jealousy and the fear of individual aggrandizement, it might sometimes impede the progress of improvement as well as power; in circumscribing the steps of ambition, it might check the march of science, and retard the moral advancement of the world; or, while it provided for the general independence and security, by setting limits to empires, deprive particular provinces of local advantages, and intercept the common benefits of nature. These are the crimes it is charged with—they have not been extenuated in my hands.

That, like all human institutions, this system had its defects and imperfections, is a melancholy truth which I will not attempt to deny or dissemble, but when active malice and indolent declamation have exhausted themselves in its impeachment, it will be dismissed with honour and acquitted with applause.

An artificial barrier, and an interdicted river, though happier themes for eloquence and poetry, are not more intrinsically unjust or injurious than commercial prohibitions, or colonial restrictions; and during the operation and energy of its principle, this criminal system had assigned

signed to all the states of Europe their course and station, their relations and alliances, a just restraint or a necessary protection, while the whole was bound together in one federal chain, sustaining the weak and confining the powerful. Under its salutary influence, our small but interesting quarter of the globe has been gradually moulded and combined into one vast republic, the independence of its several members asserted and assured, the ambition of the preponderant nations disappointed and repressed, and finally regarded as a treason against the liberty of all.

This jealousy for more than a whole century has principally regarded the French nation, whose immense population and resources, with the extent of their territory and advantageous position upon the continent and the ocean, but more than all, their restless character and military talents have constantly threatened, during that period, particular states, or the common independence of Europe.

I have said the French *nation*, not the king or the government, as is the cant of artful and of superficial politicians ; because there is no error more vulgar and illiberal than to charge upon princes and ministers as an individual fault, the common propensity and passion of their country ;

and because in fact the government of France, with the abominable and absurd system of its financial administration, has frequently contributed in no small degree to defend us from the force and fury of its numberless inhabitants, wasting their means and misdirecting their efforts, which are both naturally too great and formidable for the common security and repose.

It is impossible to cast our eyes over the map, or over the history of Europe, without instantly perceiving the danger resulting from the enormous disproportion and natural preponderance of France. The system of which we are speaking had itself improvidently favoured it in the beginning, for as the first peril arose from the power of Austria, then possessed of Spain, the Low Countries, and the New World, the aggrandizement of France had been desired and promoted by the other states, as the sole barrier and defence they could resort to, against the ambition of that family: and from the force of prejudice and habit, they continued the same policy, long after all this danger had subsided, after the separation of the empire from the hereditary dominions, and after France had become more formidable herself than the state against which her greatness was to be erected.

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It is important to call these circumstances to recollection, as the period of a general pacification approaches, and to consider whether it can be expedient at that time to depart in any material degree from the wisdom and policy of this system, and to abandon the wholesome experience of four centuries, either from the pressure and impatience of momentary inconvenience, or for speculations of future and contingent advantages.

In the course of the following pages, I intend to consider both these propositions, which have acquired more credit and created more anxiety in the world than they are entitled to. And I shall endeavour to shew, first, that the state of this kingdom is not such as to compel us to any deviation from our old maxims, and policy, nor that of the enemy, if it were so, such as to entitle or enable it to profit by our embarrassments. Secondly, That the state of the colonies or possessions of Europe in other quarters of the world, is not such as to afford any reasonable hope of our finding a counterbalance there to the predominance of France, if we were to assent to her pretensions upon the territories she has conquered from our allies.

In the course of these enquiries, it will become necessary for me to connect the war with
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the principle of the French revolution ; and that I may do so with more accuracy, I shall first treat of them separately, and afterwards combine them together, as far as they appear to me to act upon one another, and to be reciprocally causes and effects of our present dangers, apprehensions, or difficulties.

From the immense variety and importance of the objects that must pass under my consideration, I shall perhaps be forced to treat of them with a degree of precision and brevity that may appear confident ; I am so far, however, from feeling myself liable to any reproaches upon this account, that I can honestly affirm, that it is from anxiety for truth and correctness in positions which are intimately blended with the welfare, and perhaps the existence, of my country, that I forbear to recommend them to the imagination, and endeavour to speak home to the understanding and the heart.

I have said that the balance of power was exposed to the disclosure of a new principle, as well as by the effects of the war. Considering this principal in general, and without analysis or detail, it had for its object to dissolve all the existing treaties and alliances of Europe, throughout the states of which, it was to render general

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one species of constitution, and to take the whole under the protection and guaranty of France. Thus instead of maintaining and invigorating the combination which had so long appeared necessary to repress the turbulence and ambition of that nation, we were to surrender every fortress and barrier into its hands, to receive its garrisons, and trust implicitly to its generosity and forbearance. It would be curious to consider the artifice and foresight with which the principal men in that country prepared from afar, and disposed the public mind to receive so great a shock of opinion, and run counter to all the maxims, habits, and even prejudices of Europe. Unfortunately they received but too much countenance and assistance from those who either did not perceive the danger, or were anxious to turn it to their own profit and advantage. When we look at the havoc and ruin of this part of the world, it were unwise to dissemble the share its rulers have had in it ; amongst the miners and pioneers of its destruction we may distinguish its princes ; its mob-kings were preceded by imperial reformers, and it was torn to pieces by hands consecrated in its defence. This system which had long been mocked with bitterness and invective, was
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now accused as the cause of all the wars that had so often desolated Europe, and which were lately discovered to have been wanton, unjust, and unnecessary; and the common religion, which even speaking politically, had no doubt been a principal cause of the unrivalled prosperity of this part of the world, was exposed to the attacks of infidel sovereigns, more fatal than the ridicule of wits or philosophers.

Joseph the Second, and Frederic the *Great*, Stanislaus of Poland, and Lewis the Sixteenth, were all of them reformers, and excepting the second of them, they have all met with the fate of reformers;—it was only under their auspices that the Voltaires and Rousseaus, the Mirabeaus and Condorcets worked at the common ruin and at their own. When posterity shall contemplate the relations of the last six eventful years, its incredulity will disappear and its doubts subside, because it will find them preceded by the expulsion of the monks in Flanders, by the destruction of the barrier in the Netherlands, by the writings of Frederic the Second, by the Comte Rendû and ministerial democracy of Neckar—perhaps even its astonishment will be little or momentary, for it will have come fresh from beholding all Europe leagued together in defence

defence of the rebellious colonies of America, and united to pull down and annihilate the only power which could protect its liberties, and which had protected them so often.

All these events and circumstances are distinct and predisposing causes, of the French revolution, as they are also of the forced and violent position in which we actually find ourselves, from the moral corruption and physical inequality of the world.

The *exterior* principle of this revolution, if I may be excused that expression, being the destruction of the balance of power by the dissolution of the treaties, that of Munster or Westphalia became their first obstacle, and gave them the greatest embarrassment. Favourable at the time to the aggrandizement of France, it had nevertheless defined and fixed the limits of her empire ; and besides its express stipulations had established a principle in Europe, which with the progress of her ambition, and the impunity of her usurpations, became a kind of enchanted circle, where her spirit felt uneasy and confined. " What has France to do, says Mirabeau, with the pretended *balance of powers* ? With ten years of a good administration, she would regain her *natural superiority over all Europe together.*"

Till the last war, it was a general maxim of that cabinet, that she must crush England in the first contest in which that power should be able to create no diversion by her alliances on the continent.—The events and circumstances of that war produced but a very imperfect change in this sanguine persuasion, and certainly did not materially operate upon the political opinions of France, as every person conversant in the writings of that country must acknowledge. They considered us as ruined and humiliated, and about to be deprived of our possessions in the East Indies, as we had unfortunately been forced to abandon our colonies in the West. “England, says the same writer, whose authority I prefer to many others upon the same subject, *England can do nothing.*” She is no longer the first power, when she has lost the Indies (which she can scarce retain for ten years) she will be a power of the *third* rank. He then foretells that she will experience commotions, and that she will be sprinkled with her own blood ; but in recompence for her preponderance in Europe which she is to forfeit, he generously makes her a present of liberty, which he declares to be incompatible with external power ; and he concludes, that France

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has nothing to apprehend from her, that she cannot revenge the injuries of the last war, for fortunately, he exclaims, "*Elle n'en a pas les moyens* ; that is out of her power *."

Not being however quite certain of destroying the treaties by the nullity of Great Britain, which would effectually accomplish that purpose, and restore her *natural superiority to France over all Europe together* ; another project was set on foot, a kind of partition-treaty, by which the empire of the sea and of commerce, might be secured to Great Britain, if, upon her part, she would abandon the system of Europe, and assign the whole dominion of the continent to France. And he proposes in consequence, "a solid, sincere, and eternal alliance, *founded upon a treaty of commerce*, which should put an end for ever to national jealousies and bind indissolubly the interests of the two empires. "United," says he, "they would without difficulty, impose *silence upon the rest of the earth*†."

These plans or opinions are become important and remarkable, because the events of the war, in which France has made such enormous acquisitions upon the continent, and the arms

* Dentes sur l'ouverture de l'Escaut, p. 8 and 9. † Page 21.

of Great Britain been crowned with equal success upon the ocean, have apparently given body and consistency to this dangerous and wicked speculation, and an idea has been thrown out into the world, that the territorial usurpations of France might possibly be conceded at the peace, if an equivalent were found in the commercial and maritime aggrandizement of Great Britain. Though it is premature to examine this opinion, I cannot omit the first opportunity of branding it with every epithet, due to the most base and dishonourable of all public counsels, excepting indeed, those, which would submit implicitly to the preponderance of France, without any recompence or struggle, any hope of emancipation or reversion of liberty.

Another project of France, for *regaining her natural superiority over all Europe together*, was the forming the ten provinces of the Austrian Netherlands into an independent republic, and to open the navigation of the Scheldt by a war upon the United Provinces, in which presuming the weakness and insignificance of England, and the insurrections she would be able to excite against the Stadtholder, she had no apprehensions of failing in success. It is to be observed, the Emperor, the Dutch, and Great Britain, were

were at this time all at peace with France, yet she was meditating and conspiring revolutions, in every one of their respective states.

The limits and barriers, the whole conventional law of Europe, stood in the way of France, even the geography and distinct appellations of its provinces and people, seemed an obstacle to her *natural superiority*. Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Flemings, reminded her of treaties which confined and coerced her, and she recalled with affectation and solicitude the names of these regions and people, from times preceding the civilization and settlement of this quarter of the globe, from remote periods of antiquity, from the treatise of Tacitus, and the commentaries of Cæsar. Batavians, Belgians, Allobroges, Massilians, every term that could shake the habitual relations and existing system, was discovered and restored: but the treaty of Munster was exposed also to a very peculiar species of attack, which was countenanced by the Emperor, who at that time had two projects to be favoured by it, namely, the opening of the Scheldt, and the invasion of the liberties of Germany. These were equally guaranteed by the treaty, as the treaty itself was by the principal Governments of Europe—but it was found that this treaty being against
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the natural law, in as much as rivers have a right to flow wherever they please, no positive stipulations had any power to interrupt the liberty of their course*. The Emperor however having miscalculated the state of public opinion, and his own personal influence in the French cabinet, was obliged finally to desist from this pretension by the treaty of 1788, and that of Munster was respected till it became the direct interest of France to infringe it.

I have adverted to this circumstance because it afterwards became the immediate cause of the present war, and is the only one that it is now, at all necessary *diplomatically* to assign for it, tho', I protest I know not why, it has been more usual to name others more disputable and remote, such as the decree of 19th Nov. 1792, and the interference of France, in our domestic œconomy and situation; these, in my opinion, would be more properly considered simply as additional and powerful motives for defending that treaty with greater obstinacy, because they prove that at the time the French openly attacked it, and with it the system of Europe, they endeavoured to divert its guarantees from maintaining and pro-

* Annales politiques, civiles & littéraires, No. 88, 89.

testing it, by exciting intestine disturbances and commotions in their respective states. It is in pursuance of the plan I have laid down, that I am thus careful to separate the principle of the French revolution from the cause of the war, though I have no scruple to assert that nothing but the war could have turned the course and eluded the violence of the revolution:—that it brought the loaded cloud nearer to us I will not deny, but it has guided the bolt over our heads, and discharged it into the earth, harmless and spent for ever.

Having disembarrassed the cause of hostilities from all those collateral circumstances with which it is connected, and reduced it to the simple violation of the treaty of Westphalia, in the pretensions and invasion of the French upon Holland, in the beginning of the year 1793, I shall consider the contagion and danger of their principles and their machinations in the bosom of foreign states, under a totally distinct head, when I come to examine the remaining obstacles to peace and negotiation.

The French being thus clearly aggressors in the war, it remains defensive on the part of Great Britain and her allies, unless, which I do not recollect, France has ever offered restitution
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and indemnity for the injury. If she ever has done so, I am willing to confess that it has changed its nature, and become unjust and ambitious upon our part; but till this fact is pointed out and ascertained to me, I can discover only the injustice and ambition of those, who belie, if they do not betray, the cause of their country.

Wars, say the civilians, are not massacres and confusions, but the highest trials of right, when princes and states put themselves upon the justice of God for the deciding of their controversies, by such success as it shall please him to award on either side. The war therefore may be considered as an appeal to Heaven, and though to prove it defensive on our part, we need assign to men no other proofs than the violation of the treaty and actual invasion on the part of France, yet in submitting our cause to the great Judge and Disposer of Events, we have the consolation to know that it is defensive, not of the Scheldt only, or of the fields of Flanders, but of our liberty, our constitution, and our religion, but of his laws and our own.

If we are to seek his judgment however in the actual circumstances of the war, it is impossible to conceal that we have experienced many calamities and disasters, some indeed that
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are inseparable from war, others arising from our own mistakes and errors, and still others more dreadful than all, from the visitation of disease and the fury of the elements. It is no discovery of to-day, nor of the philosophy of to-day, that *war* is an evil, nor that it is followed by a train of evils, nor that it has been frequently provoked by the violence of a king or the passions of a people; but it would be extraordinary indeed, if a spirit which neither piety nor reason, neither faith nor philosophy, have been able to subdue, should vanish at the bidding of his fellow-devil Sedition. I confess my astonishment is not excited only, but my indignation also, at all that cant and whining which have overwhelmed the press, and the debates of both houses of Parliament, and at those perfidious tears which fall *six times a week* over the unavoidable calamities that pursue its steps, because I observe them to proceed from men, more anxious to call it nearer home, and to light it up in the bosom of their country, than to drive it to the confines of the earth, or extinguish it altogether.

Those who would run the risk of *civil* war, cannot take it ill if I suspect them of exaggerating in some degree the antipathy they bear

to *foreign* war. Those who extract the immorality from insurrection and revolt, who reduce sedition and rebellion, so long taught as a science and a duty, to a frigid calculation of prudence, and apprehend nothing from violence and treason, but the improbability of their success.—Those who would turn our swords into *our own* bosoms, and shed our blood in *our own* fields, have no reason to be offended if it is not only to the delicacy of their nerves, and the excess of their sensibility, that I attribute a part of the repugnance they express at the spectacle of our contests with *rival and hostile nations*.

War, however, is an evil, and no men can be more sensible that it is so, than they whose duty it is to declare its necessity, and announce the fatal sentence to their country—They act under a dreadful responsibility to the laws, to public opinion, to posterity, and to heaven. It is not the whining of the press, it is not the phrase-factory of the opposition, that can deplore or express the evils of war, as they are felt by those, who every moment compare them with the evils which are avoided by war; who make the estimate and set-off in their bosoms, and weigh the blood which flows, with the *cause*

cause that demands it—But when all its miseries are numbered and detailed, there is a balance to be struck at home, and a comparison to be adjusted abroad. On the one side, we see our fields remain with their ancient proprietors, the laws maintained, and justice administered, our temples unpolluted, and our constitution perfect on its base. On the other, when we contemplate the state of our enemies, we do not find them exempted from impartial calamity, the war has dealt out destruction with an equal hand, and measured the disasters of mankind.

*Sunt illis sua funera, parque per omnes
Tempestas.*

I see the ocean covered with their defeats, and the forests of Germany reeking with their blood ; and turning from that disgusting spectacle to their interior situation, what do I behold in the wild desert of their empire, but a pale and emaciated people, expiring with famine, or fainting with fatigue and oppression ? I see their sufferings and their groans strike upon my ears, but I cannot discover the religion, or the justice, or the fundamental laws for which they are fighting ; I do not find the husband-

man in the fields, nor the merchant in his counting-house, nor the citizen upon their foundations, nor in the cause for which they are contending any thing that is respectable but the enchanting name of their country!

Yet for this I find them brave every thing, and bear every thing, and am compelled to admire their mistaken patriotism, as well as their military prowess, and their political resolution.

Imagination cannot paint a species or excess of misery, which they have not felt and complained of; they have endured and perpetrated every horror, and suffered the action and reaction of every crime; full of indignation and remorse, ashamed of the past, and hopeless of the future, they derive a constancy from despair, and persevere in the inextinguishable desire of *aggrandizing* their country—their country, which panting at the heart, and bleeding at every pore, assumes the attitude and language of a conqueror, and dictates the terms of an insulting peace, with a firm voice and an imposing countenance.

It would be ungenerous to withhold applause from a spectacle like this; there has been a time when it would have been the admiration of British patriots, when it would have been
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been the language of those who aspired to popularity, to bid us also, to dare and suffer all for our country; and when this part of the conduct of France would have been selected for the example of Englishmen, rather than that spirit of insubordination and anarchy, which are the true causes of all the misery and distress of our unhappy enemies. Is it not surprizing that those who take so deep an interest in all the rest of their situation, should see nothing great or generous in devoting themselves for their country? and for what a country? while, on the contrary, they have preached to their own a base and cowardly despondency, an abject and almost unqualified submission, under the "first scratches of the war?" but what do they discover in the character of Englishmen so new and degenerate, as to make them expect, that we will quit the gay and gallant vessel which we navigate, or strike our flag to a wreck—to a wreck which our arms have made, and the storm tosses without a rudder or a pilot, in which all that is interesting is the despair and affection of the wretches that cling to her?

It is unnecessary for me to make the comparison in detail between the actual position of the contending countries. The internal state of
France

France has lately been demonstrated to the world with much accuracy and precision, in an excellent treatise upon their revolution and finances, which has been read and admired by every person of judgment and good information. I have consequently not many remarks to set down upon that important subject; and no very material details, excepting upon circumstances which have arisen subsequent to that publication; and upon the other side, I shall confine myself in the same manner to the notice of a few of the leading and prominent features in our own situation and circumstances.

With respect to the depreciation of the assignats, which at the time I write is liv. 5000=24 gold, or precisely $201=1$, I confess my scepticism as to all reasoning and calculation that can be formed upon it. Notwithstanding the decay and languor it experiences, there is a principle about it, which would make me unhappy, if I foresaw no prospect of pacification till it expired, I should be sorry indeed that we had nothing but a reversion in the peace, and that the war was at any rate to terminate only with the funeral of this paper.

In my opinion, the actual resources of a country are nothing else than its physical resources,

sources, namely, its population, subsistences, and capital, together with the faculty of re-production it possesses in the industry of its fields and towns; I consider the credit of a state as very distinct from its property; that it arises from the opinion or experience of its good faith and solvency, that it is limited and proportioned to its real possessions, and is so far from adding any thing *positive* to its resources, that it diminishes them at any given period of time, by having acted before as an artificial capital, and consequently enabled it to dispense with a part of the real, which must otherwise have remained at home, if it were merely as the machine and vehicle of its commerce.

I have said *at any given time*, because no man can be more sensible than myself, of the *growing* and *progressive* advantages derived from it, and from the very circumstances I have mentioned. But these considerations are foreign to the immediate subject of discussion. It seems certain that in the most prosperous times, the credit of a country can never be pushed beyond its supposed faculties of repayment, and in periods of exigency, that, if it could be so, it would be so far from being entitled to be considered as an advantage or a resource, that it
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would add the greatest weight to its decline and ruin.

A great part of the physical resources of a country are at the disposal of regular governments, and are constantly contributed, though the operation is indirect, complex, and frequently imperceptible. The credit of the state is the most circuitous way of arriving at them, and consequently the most extravagant ; for it is nothing else but a previous mortgage of the national property for the interest and reduction of debts which are afterwards to be provided for by a more direct contribution ; and the public thus pays not only what is right and necessary to the exigencies of the Government, but an additional premium to the lender. It does not only pay the whole amount of the taxes, with the expences of levying them, but an indemnity or recompence to the individuals who have advanced them in the first instance to the state.

As a *resource* therefore, we find, in fact, that in well regulated states, their credit is never applied to but in moments of exigency, arising out of wars, which the present state of society in this quarter of the world, permits to be waged with more fury and violence, but happily during shorter periods of time, than is the case

case with less civilized nations. Between these we may observe wars progressively feeble, but longer and more implacable, and as they recede farther from the arts and improvements of society, languid and eternal.

I consider credit therefore as a sudden and ruinous way of arriving at the contributions, rendered indeed indispensable by the nature of the modern wars of Europe, but not to be counted abstractedly as one of the resources of a country.

I am inclined, in the same manner, to look upon the assignat implicitly, as an indirect method adopted by the government in France, of laying their hands upon the real resources of that country*: which mode of considering it, if I am not mistaken, will lead to more certain conclusions, than the complex and metaphysical manner of treating it as the sole fund possessed by them for the carrying on of the war.

Before it had declined through half the space of its present depreciation, I confess it ap-

* "La Politique," says Eschafferiaux, in the name of the commission of five, upon the causes of the situation of the finances, 22 Brumaire, (Oct. 13.) "Régarde les assignats comme un instrument, que la révolution a usé entre les mains de la nation; la diminution de leur valeur comme un *impôt* insensible, qui a pèse sur tous les citoyens,"

peared to me probable that it would have operated some very important change in the administration of the finances, and reduced the government to the necessity of using very extraordinary and eccentric means for arriving at the resources for which it had occasion; and though my expectations have not been realized so early as I imagined, I think that the period cannot be much longer delayed, and even that I perceive the beginning of it.

Always looking upon the assignats in the light I have mentioned, I own I never expected that even their complete annihilation (though hope and necessity will perhaps cling to them much longer than can be conceived or explained) would induce an indispensable necessity for peace. There appeared to me another *integral period* of difficulty and distress, through which the pride and pertinacity of France might still struggle, before she arrived at the boundaries of disorganization, and emerged into the Tartar barbarism which seems the object and crown of her inverted system.

The precious metals have long disappeared and been dispensed with; after full four years of decrease and decline, they have become extinct or invisible in the internal commerce and transactions

actions of the country*; though they have from time to time re-produced themselves in the *actual* plunder of the government, or the speculations of the stock-jobbers in the rue Vivienne and the Palais Egalité.—Having supplied their place by a currency, to which enthusiasm at first, and afterwards necessity and terror gave the impulse it required, it is no wonder that the government should have been astonished at the unexpected means it found in its power, not only by the credit given to its paper, but from so great a part of the specie of the empire, which being replaced by a new sign, they were enabled to transport into the neutral countries, which supplied them with the fuel and materials of war.

But as this enthusiasm subsided by degrees, and the system of terror received at least a violent interruption and discredit, I observed the depreciation to tumble with accelerated velocity, and from the enormity of the sums issued by the treasury, I expected that it would conti-

* We cannot calculate that there exists in circulation more than two or three hundred millions in specie, (= to 8 or 12 millions sterling) and even these are in the departments upon the frontiers, &c. *Le Brun, report to the council of elders in the name of the commission of finance.* Dec. 3, 1795.

nue to descend with progressive rapidity. There remained, however, another experiment, which would present society under a new face, and which I thought it likely that extraordinary people would endeavour to realize; namely, to dispense with any sign altogether, and reduce every contract and transaction to the simple and original operation of barter, or the exchange of one commodity for another, and a direct contribution of the public impositions in kind.

If I am not mistaken, they are now adopting this design, (of which they might have derived the idea from some of the colonies of English America) and that it is their intention to dispense with all intermediate signs of value, and make the comparison direct with the weight or measure of corn. I observe, that all the salaries of the officers of state, &c. under the new constitution, are fixed at so many quintals of wheat. The contribution called the *forced loan*, is payable in grain, and magazines are to be erected by the government, for their reception; and there is room to believe, that the stamp duties and others, which by the late regulations are demanded in specie, will be, or are all convertible into payments in grain; so that I think it possible

possible, that this staple will quickly become the sole standard of values in the empire.

It is proper that I should remark here, that by the Tarif settled by the legislature at the end of the last year (1795) for the currency of the assignats, it is impossible that either grain or specie should enter voluntarily into the granaries or coffers of the republic, because the value being fixed at one hundred livres for one of the nominal value of the assignat, and the assignat being as I have mentioned above, at a discount upon change of more than twice that sum, every contributor will save a full half of his contingent, by making his payment in that paper. If the *forced loan*, therefore, and the other impositions are really exacted, the government will commence by withdrawing the assignats from circulation, and finish by receiving the taxes in kind; for by the confession of the minister of finance*, I am authorized to assert, what

* Report of Faipoul to the Executive Directory, Dec. 12.

"In four lines," says this minister, "the following is the state of the public treasury.

"It owes seventy-two millions in *specie*, twenty millions in bills upon Spain require time—one hundred millions of assignats per day, have not hitherto supplied a third part of the sum wanted.

what I would otherwise very willingly have taken upon my own responsibility, that the whole specie in the empire is inadequate to replace that sign of values.

By the total disappearance of an intermediate sign, if I do not deceive myself, the government hopes to be able virtually to renew the *maximum*, and lay hands *directly* upon the articles of necessity; and supposing the endurance and apathy of the people, it is not improbable that they may succeed in it for a moment. When the contributions are taken in kind, they will be no longer levied in the counting house, but from the stacks and granaries of the farmers, the shoe-maker will be taxed to furnish a certain number of shoes, the clothier will be called upon in his turn, the government will erect magazines and store-houses in every district, and the system of public contributions be a direct and general requisition *.

This

wanted. Fifteen hundred millions which will be paid within this decade, will produce but a feeble sensation.

" Citizens Directors, such is the afflicting portrait, &c. We must have measures to put an end to this frightful situation of affairs."

* There is one object which essentially demands your solicitude; it is the execution of the law which orders the payment

This is the crisis into which I imagine the French government will be thrown by the continued depreciation or extinction of the assignats, and not into the direct and immediate necessity of desisting from hostilities, as is presumed by the gentleman to whom I have alluded, and seems to be very generally adopted as an article of political faith in this country. It will not appear, however, that the difference of opinion is fatal between us, because I consider this crisis as being necessarily of very short duration, and that it will quickly conduct them to the period expected by him. But as I have observed from the delay and procrastination that attends the realizing of any opinion, men are not only dispirited and disappointed, but led to despair, and to conclude, frequently to direct contraries, as people confined by bad weather, cry out at last that it will *never* be fine, I have wished to indicate the sole obstacle I think likely to happen, if France should adhere to that principle of con-

ment in kind of one half of the contribution, for the third year of the republic, (1795).

Letter of the minister of the interior, 22d Brumaire.

In the same letter he demands from the administrators of the departments, an account of the cattle, corn, wine, fruits, hemp, &c.

quest,

quest, which will make such an event absolutely necessary to the peace, independence, and tranquillity of Europe.

I do not think it necessary to take much notice in detail of the cedula and the new project of finance, though it might expose me to misrepresentation if I were to omit it altogether : it appears to me then, both visionary and wicked ; to set up a counter-paper to the assignat, and to coin specie, is to attempt what is absurd and what is impossible. But I am inclined to consider it as a measure invented by the Government, to facilitate the design I have suggested, and withdraw the signs of value altogether ; because the very act of decreeing a better security, than that of the mortgage of the assignats, is the most violent and indecent mockery of the public faith, and must effectually extinguish all confidence in any paper whatever, and the creating a quantity of metals equal to represent and supply it, is, I imagine, an absolute and real impossibility.

Of their late reverses upon the Rhine, the series of defeats they have suffered, and the entire loss of their army in the Palatinate, I do not think it so necessary to enquire into the probable effects, as into the immediate causes,
because

because I should think it very superficial and weak to assign them exclusively to the skill and bravery of the Imperial generals and armies, or to any particular defect or even inferiority in these respects, of the forces and commanders of the Republic.—Certainly it would at least be illiberal to conclude that they had not conducted themselves upon these trying occasions, with all the valour and address, which have long rendered them so formidable in the eyes of Europe. But it is not of so much importance to remark these wounds, which however deep, might not be incurable, or these calamities, which however dreadful, might not yet be irreparable; as the causes of them, which seem to assure that they are incurable and irreparable indeed. When we learn* that the army captured in Manheim was deficient in *two-thirds* of its number, by desertion and the total stoppage of recruiting; when we attend to the complaints of the Generals, the subsequent measures of the directors for the supply of the armies of the north, and the increased severity of the laws against deserters, at the end of November, can we hesitate to pronounce the progress of depopu-

* Vide Gazette Extraordinary, Dec. 11th, 1795.

lation and famine, or doubt the real exhaustion and emptiness of the empire?

The moral and political state of this unfortunate country, is the next point of view in which I think it important to consider her. Hitherto I have endeavoured to point out the basis and conditions of a just and adequate pacification, by unavoidable concessions on her part, but the present discussion involves the wisdom and propriety, nay, the possibility of making peace with her at all. For unless those who are her advocates, or think themselves her advocates, were egregiously mistaken in some of their assertions, it would be out of the power of this country, with all its superiority and advantages, to come to a negotiation. It is consoling in this respect to observe, that by the experience which the world has seen, and France herself has acknowledged, of the evils arising from her extravagant doctrines and principles, by the successive downfall and discredit of all her provisional constitutions, by the disgrace and dispersion of her clubs and corresponding societies, and by the infamous death and punishment of so many of her fanatical leaders, by her return towards moderation, by the abjuration of her tenets, and the purging of her Pantheon, the contest is become less complicated

complicated and difficult, and the war reduced upon her side to a simple war of ambition and aggrandizement, in which I have already endeavoured to ascertain her pretensions and title to success.

There is no longer any question with what form of government, or description of persons, it is eligible to negotiate. If ever there was any thing of opinion in the causes of this war, it has long since subsided and been at rest. France herself has extinguished it in torrents of her blood, and sealed it with her own interdiction and anathema. But I know there are persons who teach, if they do not believe, that her principles are triumphant because her *republic will be acknowledged* at a general pacification; such a doctrine would be contemptible as well as absurd, if it were not propagated with the most malicious and dangerous design, namely, to nourish and inflame those principles where indeed they have triumphed, if it be triumph to mislead and corrupt the ignorant and unwary, to join with the weak and the wicked, with the reprobates and outcasts of every society, to ally and confederate with vice and folly, and finally, with misery and impatience, with the inevitable hardships and repinings of the human

race and condition. Here indeed they have been welcomed, but even here they are obliged to dissemble and conceal themselves, to hide their frame, and to mask their deformity.

But it is not in the establishment of a republic at home, that the revolutionary principle would have triumphed, if it had not been crushed and strangled by that very republic in its cradle. It was in the *republic of Great Britain*, in the *republic of Spain*, and of the *Empire*, in that of the *whole world*, that it was to have reared the standard of victory. And what a republic? Not such as France has now founded for herself, composed of orders, states and gradations, (no matter with what symmetry or coherence); not a republic of kings and patricians, and commons, as it has now instituted (I do not enquire with what temperament and proportion) but a republic of anarchy and confusion, of confiscation and pillage, of divorcees and murder; a republic of *sans culottes*, that is to say, of prostitutes and ruffians, of ravishers and robbers; a republic of theft and force, of brutal violence and lust, a community of property and of women!

If we are to seek for the principles of the revolution, they are so far from having triumphed in France, that they are disavowed and ex-

crated

crated by all parties and descriptions in that country; they are to be found, however, and to be found in their statute book; but not in triumph, not even in existence, but cancelled and repealed, branded with infamy, and devoted with the tears and curses of twenty millions of human beings.

They are to be found in our disorganizing clubs and societies, whither they seem to have fled before the first steps of returning wisdom and morality in France; they are to be found amongst the assassins of kings and the subverters of constitutions, in the caverns of guilt, speculation, and despair.

The first principle of the revolution was to break the leagues and confederacies of Europe, and the mode of action was not only the dethronement, but the murder of kings. Where is the regiment of fourteen hundred assassins, called Tyranicides, in the new vocabulary of *useful crimes* and *justifiable murders*, that were decreed in the Convention? Let us read the comments that are circulated in France, upon the outrage of the English Jacobins against his Majesty's person, in his passage to parliament; it is impossible to speak of that crime in any terms of horror and execration, in which it is not reprobated

ed by the journalists of France. The *Courier Français* and the *Courier Universel* in particular, reprove one of the Deputies of the Convention, for the manner in which he had spoken of it, "as if, they say, any nation would treat with a people that rejoices in the crimes and miseries of every other." Another paper, under the head of "revolutionary movements at London," enters more minutely into the subject, and laments with a deepness and sincerity of sorrow that might well become every Englishman to feel and express, the possibility of any revolution being attempted in England. Has the principle, therefore, of *tyrannicide* triumphed? does it survive any where but in the den of English anarchists and confounders, and is it not criminated even by their quondam confederates in France?

Has the principle of *equality* proved triumphant? let us look at the robes of state, the pretorian guards, and the enormous salaries of the *five lords commissioners of the monarchy*; let us look too at the council of ancients, (their upper house of parliament) at their habits of ceremony, their salaries, their guards, and the royal palaces they both inhabit. Has not equality been defined and frittered away to mean
nothing

nothing but equality before the law, a right to be tried by the same tribunals, or to be candidate for the same employments? an equality more fully enjoyed in England during a century at least, than it can be possible for France, supposing an immediate end to her commotions, to enjoy it for a century to come. By the third article of the declaration of rights, which is to be considered as a kind of preamble to the constitution, *hereditary* rank is indeed formally abolished, that is, as far as it is capable of being so by a declaration: but hereditary honours, and the importance attached to birth and particular families, cannot be destroyed by any positive law or institution, or hindered from giving favour and authority to the pretensions of candidates, so that the descendants of great and popular persons, will continue to have any advantage over new and unknown ones, and the part of this principle which appears to be adopted, is trivial or nugatory so far as it regards *the people*. But is any equality of property or condition, which is *their* promised equality, triumphant? The very *first* article of the declaration of rights, takes property under its protection, and it is farther secured by the 35th provision of the constitution; so that equality has
shared

shared the fate of tyrannicide, that is to say, after having spent its rage, and covered France with crimes and calamities, it has been consigned to shame and oblivion. But it is important to keep its infamy alive, and in memory, as a negative example to France herself, to Europe, and to posterity.

Has the principle of *annual legislatures* and *universal suffrage* proved triumphant? The legislative assemblies are renewed partially every year, namely, in one third part, which is exactly equivalent to a triennial re-election of the whole*. But the right of voting is so far from being universal, that it is limited to property, and to the contribution of property, for though it is declared† that every *citizen* has an equal right to vote for the representatives, &c. the right of *citizenship* is afterwards restricted ‡ to those who pay a direct contribution, real or personal, to residents, and to persons inscribed in the register of the district, and every species of domestic servant is expressly deprived of it during his continuance in that situation§; so that neither of these prin-

* Art. 53, de la constitution.

† 8th Article of the Declaration of Rights.

‡ In the 8th article of the constitution.

§ Title 2d of the constitution. Art. 10, and subsequent Art.

ciples, I imagine, will be pronounced to have been triumphant.

I now come to speak of another principle, the triumph of which under our own peculiar circumstances at this time, might have been of no trifling importance; but fortunately, the experience and consequent rejection of it in France, have preceded and facilitated its defeat in this country; namely, the principle of *clubs, associations, public barangues, debates and correspondences*. I had originally intended to have extracted some part of the speeches of Bourdon, Tallien, Legendre, and others of the principal orators in France, from the denunciations which took place previous to the shutting up of the Jacobins, and from the reports which preceded the abolition of the popular societies*. But I abstain from them; for I will not found any thing upon the confessions or sentiments of men, without much probity or shame. I do not consider their opinions upon most topics to be totally exempt from interestedness, *occasionality*, and violence; and the suppression of the clubs being now made a part of the *fundamental* and *unalterable* laws of the republic; I shall be able

* Sixth fructidor, August 22, 1793.

to establish this part of my argument with more certainty, precision, and force, from the provisions of the constitution itself.

By that constitution it is ordained,

That "there cannot be formed any corporations or associations contrary to the public order*."

That "no assembly of citizens shall take the name of popular society†."

That "no particular society occupying itself in (the discussion of) political subjects, can *correspond* with any other, nor *affiliate* itself with it, nor hold *public* sittings, composed of the members and assistants (or auditors), distinguished from each other, nor impose conditions of *election* or *admission*, nor assume the right of *excluding*, nor cause its members to carry any outward sign of their association‡."

"That the citizens cannot exercise their political rights out of the primary assemblies, or those of the communes§."

"That the citizens are at liberty to address petitions to the public authorities; but they must be *individual* petitions. *No association* can pre-

* Constitution, Art. 1. Tit. 14.

† Art. 360.

‡ Const. Art. 362. § Const. Art. 363.

sent them in their collective capacity, excepting the constituted authorities: and these only upon account of objects peculiar to their own departments" (attribution).

"The petitioners must not forget the *respect* due to the constituted authorities*."

And by that constitution it is ordained, "that every groupe, mob, or assemblage (*attroupe-ment*) of the people, is to be *instantly* dispersed at the *word of command*, or to be attacked by the *military*."

This is the actual state of liberty in France as it regards popular meetings, assemblages of the people in the streets or fields, clubs, lectures, debates, even the sacred and unalienable right of petition; and I imagine that not even those persons who *suffer* most under the action of the late bills for the security of his Majesty's person, and the coercion of seditious meetings; not even Mr. *Thelwall* himself, will be willing to exchange our existing laws upon these objects for those of our neighbouring republic, where it is not easy to perceive how any man can get a direct livelihood by haranguing against the government and constitution.

It is remarkable, however, and it leads me to

* Const. Art. 364.

the collateral consideration of another revolutionary principle of no mean importance, which had well nigh escaped me in the croud, namely, that of the *sovereignty* of the majority of individuals of every society; I say, it is remarkable that upon this occasion none of the demagogues have thought proper to remind the green and unfledged republicans of France of their *right to resist*, and of *prudent insurrections* the most sacred of all their duties. It is, indeed, altogether extraordinary, and shews the effect of a dreadful experience both upon the popular leaders and upon the people. The first, no doubt, are become afraid of the violent machine they can set in motion, but can never controul; and the second, weary of being disturbed to no end, and agitated without direction or object, desire nothing but an indolent repose, and will yield their metaphysical sceptre to any hand, not only that can govern them well, but that can govern them at all.

With the sovereignty of the people atheism seems to have fallen to the ground. Atheism so convenient to the doctrine of sacred, or of prudent revolt. "The people" pursued by so

* Vide a Parisian Journalist, extracted in the 29th number of M. Peltier's Paris, p. 241.

many

many calamities, demand only a change in their condition—they shew upon every occasion *the greatest aversion to political affairs*—in the country and the cities the churches are every where crowded with a pious people, pouring out their regrets in the bosom of *religion*.”—With the sovereignty and the philosophy of the people another principle of the revolution has been extinguished, namely, that of public prostitution, of the arbitrary divorce of wives by husbands, and of husbands by wives*. The political state of women, their rights and liberties have disappeared out of the code of the new constitution; but to purity, to domestic happiness and honour, the source of every private and public good, to the nice relations of tenderness and sentiment, there is no return: the delicate sex that even “the airs of heaven may visit too rudely,” withers and fades with the first breath of vice, the morals of the people, according to their own mutual accusations and confessions, are entirely vitiated—vitiated I fear irretrievably; for of all the barriers and Alps that lay between France and liberty, the most impenetrable, the most insurmountable, the most impervious is the

* The laws respecting divorces were suspended by a decree of the Convention, Aug. 2, 1795—(15 thermidor)

extreme

extreme and universal corruption of their manners, a corruption which, as far as I have had any opportunity of observing, is at once that of brutal luxury and barbarous refinement.

The principles of the revolutionary system having been therefore completely unfolded, are very generally exploded in France, and their whole force of poison may be regarded as spent and evaporated ; a circumstance I beg leave to insist upon the more, because I am ready to confess, that if I did not regard it as having effectually taken place, I would never advise nor consent to a pacification with that country, in any case short of an absolute necessity, arising out of our own calamities and exhaustion, out of an *actual* weakness and inability. But fortunately, not only those principles have perished, but the authors and heroes of them, whose fate has been justly implicated with the pernicious and destructive doctrines upon which they built their fugitive popularity and greatness ; I say *fortunately*, not that I rejoice in the sufferings and punishment of those unhappy persons, for wickedness itself is pitiable in its retribution ; it is in triumph and success alone, that it is an object of vengeance or hatred ; but because such examples are necessary to im-

press

press the obtuse capacity of the multitude, to deter and terrify, for ages to come, and to mark, by visible examples, the expiation of public guilt, and the periods of returning justice and reason.

It is not the men whose personal flagitiousness and crimes ; it is not they whose atrocity and ferociousness, whose invention and refinement, whose excess and obduracy in guilt, have dishonoured, not France alone, but human nature, that I should select from the common and undistinguishing atonement. It is not the Herberts and Chaumettes, the Marats and Dantons, the Carriers and Robespierres ; but the persons who made pretence to virtue and philosophy, and abstained themselves from the general immorality, they let loose upon their country, that I should hold up to mark the downfall of the fanaticism they preached. Petion and Roland, Brissot and Condorcet, the meteor heroes of the revolution, where are they, and their coadjutors and disciples ? If one of them has escaped the common fate of his companions, or if they could cry from the tomb, they would speak, I think, in the words of the poet :

Infanda per orbem

Supplicia et scelerum pœnas expendimus omnes !

Since

Since I am upon the subject of these unfortunate persons, it occurs to me to say a few words upon their peculiar enthusiasm, and to consider the principles of the revolution in what may be called their *beau jour*, their best point of view, to throw a glance over that amiable and seductive side which they first presented to sensible and sanguine goodness; just as they offered afterwards equality and licentiousness to the sensual and corrupted. This may be called the philosophy *par excellence* of the revolution, and deserves a much longer and more careful consideration than falls within the scope and utility of my present design. It is indeed so mixed and blended with whatever can ravish or enchant the imagination, whatever is pleasing to admit in idea or abstraction; so amiable in error, so delightful in extravagance, that it is painful to the strongest minds to return from it towards the dullness of truth and reality. It is no wonder, therefore, that so many ardent and susceptible spirits should prefer to remain in an enchanted labyrinth of their own creation, without track or limits, to travelling in the rough and hackneyed path of practicable virtue and attainable perfection.

This is the natural error of all those who
speculate

speculate upon public good, in situations which preclude them from any great probability of contributing to it, by any thing else but their speculations ; as they never expect to be called into action, or that the promises they give will one day be demanded at their hands, they grant with a boundless generosity, and bless with "a perpetual giving hand." And surely, it would be cruel and illiberal to withhold any thing of what is so easy to part with as metaphysical benevolence and wisdom, of what is so well received abroad, and is so unprofitable or pernicious at home.

The misfortune of France, in the outset of her revolution (a misfortune from which all the rest have derived in a right and lineal succession) was, that her philosophers who made it, were never educated nor intended to have power, nor could ever have dreamed of possessing it ; hence they scattered abstract and visionary notions with an incautious hand, imprudent and irresponsible, creating Eutopias and Oceanas, Societies and Commonwealths, of which the first and most glaring absurdity is, that they never could be inhabited by human beings, by citizens of flesh and blood.

While they groaned over the vices and pal-

pable corruptions of governments, they forgot the imperfections of nature and the frailty of man ; and passing a general act of amnesty and oblivion for the common faults and weaknesses of humanity, they were careful to except those persons upon whom were cast the great parts and characters in the drama of the world. Upon them they charged the crimes, the miseries, and the ignorance of the great body of our race, condemned by an indispensable condition of existence, to cultivate or subdue her in the fields, and to supply or imitate her in the cities. Unfortunately their own government was too guilty of a great part of the accusation, to be able to repel the rest ; for the labouring classes were oppressed and degraded by a pernicious system of finance and feodality, to a degree that made it hard to separate and distinguish the natural from the political evil.

I hasten over this interesting and important subject, which I wish rather to point out than investigate, and confine myself to observe, that if the philosophy that undertook to relieve these grievances, had been able to analyze and attribute them to their true causes, it might have removed the political ill, without corrupting the
moral

moral agent, or disturbing the natural condition; but knowing no object, and feeling no care but to speculate and dream of visionary amendment, it confounded every thing with an ignorant benevolence; and mixing the abuses of power, with the hardships of the human lot and existence, taught the people to throw off with the respect for their ancient institutions, and established government, every sanction of morality, every passive virtue; their submission to the will of heaven, with that to the monarchy, and their religion together with their allegiance.

One of the most sublime and brilliant of these delusive dreams, was what was called in the lofty language of the revolution, the endless *perfectibility* of the human species*; for since all its weakness, errors and calamities, were now demonstrated to flow exclusively from evil governments, it followed that they would be cut off in their source and dried up for ever, by the simple institution of good ones; if indeed, it were not to be expected that society as it advanced towards perfection, would maintain itself without government at all, by consent of virtues, and uniformity of will.

* Condorcet, esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'espèce humaine, chap. dernier.

This principle, however, has been abandoned with the rest after a baneful experience. After having swelled the vanity and inflamed the rancour of the people, after having caused every species of excellence to be considered as an usurpation and an injury, and levelled the aristocracy of talents and virtues, with this of birth, and that of property, it is consigned to oblivion—“ We must not, says Lepeau* one of the kings whom the French have preferred to Louis the XVIth, we must not make to ourselves any chimerical idea of the perfection of man, he is nearly the same at all times,” a cruel sentence, remarkable for the coldness and phlegm with which it is delivered, but more remarkable for its insolence and falshood, as he must well know who has so long speculated upon the ignorance and credulity, the passions and prejudices of the people, and depraved and brutalized a whole nation, till it is become patient of him and his colleagues, after having murdered a prince, whose only fault was to think it capable of virtue or amendment.

There remains therefore no danger from the brilliant chimeras, any more than from the visi-

* Rapport au nom de la commission des onze.

ble deformity of those principles which have desolated France. Not one of them has triumphed, and only one remains in existence. This one, however, contains the seeds of all the rest, for all would revive and spring up again in foreign states, if France were permitted to *preserve her conquests and destroy the equilibrium of Europe*. Cured herself by experience, she would spread around her the mischiefs she banished from her own bosom ; she would corrupt with the poisons she has vomited ; and, conquering with one hand and contaminating with the other, she would impress upon the nations that true organizing impulse which would make them revolve for ever round her own endless revolutions.

But, though no principle of the revolution appears to have met with long success, or to be finally triumphant ; the acknowledgement of the republic, which is virtually made by his majesty's message of the 8th December ult. has been, I cannot perceive upon what grounds, interpreted by some persons, as a sacrifice or humiliation upon the part of Great Britain. If it were so, I profess I think the time and circumstances under which it was made, namely, the bankruptcy of the enemy, and the successive defeats
and

and disasters they had encountered in Germany, the most extraordinary that his servants could have selected, for advising him to any measure unpleasant or derogatory to his feelings or pretensions; I am inclined however to think, that there will be found considerably more of magnanimity than of mortification not only in the time and circumstances, but in the language and sentiments of that message. Still it has been suspected, that the administration were adverse to the acknowledgment of the republic, and therefore that this step is painful and humiliating to them. Upon this subject it is important to be explicit and perspicuous, because the opinion is capable of causing much mischief or delusion.

I have little doubt, then, that it would have been more satisfactory to the feelings of the king's ministers, and to those of every honest and sensible mind in his majesty's dominions, if the successes of this war had been so general and complete on the one hand, and if the distresses and calamities of France on the other, had so perfectly and effectually opened her eyes upon the inaptitude of a republican form of government to her physical and moral situation, that the issue of both combined should have been the restoration of the monarchy; I say, I have no doubt

doubt that such would have been their wishes, as I have no scruple to acknowledge that such are my own.—They include the return of the exiles, and a period to that mass of individual misery and persecution, which is without a parallel in the history of the world, unless perhaps in the subversion of the western empire, when whatever was civilized became the prey of whatever was barbarous; and an effeminate and dissolute world was plundered and oppressed by a rude and savage race, that seemed fresh from nature, and vomited by the earth.

This, I think that they, and whoever can feel or reason in these kingdoms, must have desired with them—*Diis aliter visum est*. They have no power over fate, or controul upon necessity; if they had, they would be fearfully responsible for throwing away their arms, and acknowledging *even this* republic. Not that they, or the constitution of this country, have any thing to apprehend, as I think it is insinuated, from its neighbourhood, or example. But that France herself has every thing to apprehend and to dread from it, but because it is incompatible with the tranquillity and repose of France herself, and because the turbulence and revolutions of France are incompatible with the tranquillity and repose of this country, and of Europe.

But

But we must not forget, or overlook, in the lustre and dazzle of our own fortune and comparative prosperity, the *misfortunes of our allies*; the spoliation and dismemberment of Europe; our own losses and privations; and, above all, the criminal danger of rejecting comparative good, for a speculative and problematical *better*. — If, at this peace, we shall reinstate them in all their possessions, restore the balance of Europe, and indemnify ourselves, I protest, I shall never blame the government for acknowledging, nor apprehend any serious danger from the example of the tottering and deciduous republic they acknowledge.

I do not even admit, that the constitution of Great Britain would have any thing to apprehend from the establishment of a republican form of government in France, though it were simple and perfect in its kind, and adjusted to the soil, genius, manners, population, and extent of her territory, though, in one word it were fortunate and triumphant. I think the excellent modification of our constitution would not only resist, but yield with security; for two of its integral parts are already republican; and besides this, it is peculiarly worthy of remark, that the municipal government of the kingdom is wholly and universally republican.

If

If there could ever have existed any danger to the monarchical part of our constitution, from a comparison of *expence* with the pretended cheapness of a republican form of government, which I am far from admitting, the present establishments, and still more the system and principle of France, have totally removed it. For though the malevolence of party may have made the ignorant consider the whole of the civil list as an appanage of royalty; though the expences of the civil government, of the administration of justice, the salaries of the great officers of state, the necessary rewards or encouragements of talents and activity, and the honourable relief of the meritorious and unhappy, are carefully forgotten whenever the civil list is sounded in the ears of the people, yet the people cannot fail to discover, that under whatever form the public impositions are levied, or to whatever direction they are nominally attributed, that government must, in fact, be maintained at the cheapest expence, which exacts the smallest contributions from their purses. When they see, therefore, a republican tax-gatherer bearing off cloth or corn to a republican warehouse; or read a republican law for enabling the people to sell their furniture, in order to pay their quota of a forced loan to a republican government, and for imprisoning a
 1 dilatory

illatary republican lender, they will easily infer that their own government is in effect cheaper, if it were only because they need not give their shoes to the army, nor put their beds up to sale, in order to avoid the jail, or the scaffold, which fill up the back ground of this horrible picture.

But if these atrocious cruelties and extortions were to disappear at the period of returning peace, there would still arise out of the state and extravagance of the directory, and the number of their officers and assistants, out of more than forty thousand distinct administrations, maintained and paid by the indivisible republic, out of the salaries of the members of both houses of the French parliament, and the innumerable millions delivered to the secret discretion of the several ministers, which form a part of *the civil list of the republic*, a comparison too prominent and glaring, to leave any thing to be apprehended for the decent magnificence of the monarchy of England.

One danger, however, and by no means a trivial and light one, will arise from the establishment of the actual republic we discover in France : not, indeed, from its excellency or superiority over our own constitution, but from its conscious inferiority and feebleness, which there is reason to fear may incline it to seek a species

species of safety in the commotions and disturbances of foreign countries.

A bad government is always a bad neighbour; and we have four years of uninterrupted experience that it is so : but a bad government, ingrafted upon the restless character of a ruined and corrupted people, is the worst and most dangerous of all ; and the *irruption* that may be expected, immediately after the peace, from that country, is not the least or lightest of the evils for which his majesty's ministers may have to devise an antidote or a remedy.

If *this* republic, however, is to be considered as a wise, salutary, and durable institution, calculated for the happiness of France, and capable of giving tranquillity to Europe, it will remain impossible, under that point of view, to discover any thing in agreeing to it, which ought to be repugnant or humiliating to the feelings of his majesty's servants. But if it is even now tottering towards change or dissolution, as I confess it is my own individual belief and opinion, and is only so far calculated to restore peace and rest to the bosom of that criminal and bleeding country, as it is the intermediate and preparatory step to the restoration of monarchy, and of the antient *fundamental* laws and government of the land ; if all that is estimable, or even pardonable in it, is the public abjuration of pure

and unqualified democracy ; and the spectacle of rank, gradation, and authority, once more represented and rendered familiar to the people.— If this is the true light and colour in which it ought to be beheld, then I imagine *a-fortiori*, that no man will be bold or perfidious enough to assert, that ministers have abandoned or departed from any part of their object, so far as the restoration of a rational government to France, might have entered into their consideration, as one of the results of a favourable issue of the war. I think, on the contrary, that, as the war was not carried on for the attainment of this object, (though circumstances soon pointed it out as one of the best means both of terminating the quarrel with celerity, and fixing the peace upon the true and solid basis of reciprocal advantage and security,) they could never in any case, even in that of compleat discomfiture and failure, have been thought to have abandoned, or yielded any condition which they were bound to obtain by any species of engagement whatsoever ; and that having arrived at a point at which the power and the resources of the enemy are no longer formidable, and from which it is reasonable to foresee, and presume still further returns towards the establishment of a mixed and practicable constitution, it would, in any view of the case, be cruel and wrong to continue the war

war upon that account, or to exact, at the sword's point, the express stipulation of things which they never assumed the right to prescribe, but which they have reason to expect from the restoration of peace, and from the present condition of France.

Under these circumstances, we find ourselves in a situation and capacity to negotiate, and the king's message to parliament*, has effectually removed any opinion which might have been entertained of a disinclination in his majesty's servants to treat with the executive directory of France. All difficulties in the way to peace have been effectually removed, on the part of Great Britain, and the war, being reduced to the simple and ordinary nature of all former contests, might instantly determine, if the French government could be induced, either by the sense of the internal misery and calamities of their people, or by the despair of creating any domestic disturbances in England, to depart from the decree of *September 30, 1795*, and abandon the *exterior principle*, as they have done every other principle of the revolution.

Their obstinacy upon this article may, perhaps, have been considerably impaired by the recent and important successes of the Austrian arms, by the visible approach of bankruptcy and famine, and by the disappointment of any

* December 8, 1795.

expectations

expectations they might have entertained of a political explosion in this country. They must have remarked, in the first place, the universal sense of the kingdom, most unequivocally declared in so many addresses to the throne and to the parliament; they must have observed the results of a prosperity, hitherto unknown and incredible, during three years of the most violent and universal hostility, in which their own country has been completely exhausted of all its means and resources; the high value of the public funds, the competition for the loan, and the unhopèd-for lightness of the new taxes, cannot have escaped their attention; they must have seen, that not a single article of necessity is comprized in them, at a time when their own last desperate remedy consists only in the hope of laying hands upon every article of necessity, by a forcible levy of them from the several proprietors in kind.

And if they cannot fail to make this humiliating comparison at home, I would ask what consolation they can derive from enlarging their prospect, and bring the whole theatre of the war under their contemplation. I forbear to enumerate those circumstances, which are distressing and disastrous; it is better to consider France upon that side where she counts her acquisitions, and passes for prosperous and triumphant.

I was always of opinion that her conquests
would

would be burthensome to her during the war, notwithstanding the temporary relief and assistance she might draw from them by her requisitions and forcible contributions; and as it becomes evident that she cannot retain them at the general peace, it is probable that she would instantly withdraw her armies from the greatest part of them, if she did not expect to make advantage of them in the negotiation, by exacting concessions, in the nature of an equivalent, from Great Britain; in every other point of view, they have certainly been hurtful to her, if any thing is finally to be considered in that light which has accelerated the period of pacification, by extending and attenuating her efforts, in the same proportion that they diverted and exhausted her means and resources. But she can never forget that, by the conquest of Holland, she made a direct present to England of the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, probably of Batavia, and all the Dutch colonies, which would be an immense source of commercial wealth and aggrandizement to that power, even during the war, if it were to continue; whereas all the advantage she could expect from the occupation of the Dutch territory in Europe, deprived and cut off from its dependencies, resolved itself into a reversion and speculation of profit subsequent to the peace.

In the Netherlands the conduct of France affords a more unequivocal proof that she never dreamed of preserving them; because she reduced her whole views to the usufruct or waste of the moment, ransoming the inhabitants, and exporting every thing, even to the tools of industry and materials of agriculture; in the same manner, finding it impossible to retain her colonies in the West-Indies, she endeavoured, in the language of the revolution, to *neutralize* or render them unprofitable to whatever state might acquire them. Here besides the natural ruin of those beautiful plantations, and the free scope she gave to fire and destruction, she unchained a spirit, which I fear will be found too powerful for the arts or arms of all Europe to subdue. Not contented with the spoil and havoc of her own unfortunate islands, she extended her atrocious policy to the colonies of England, and endeavoured to lay the foundations of a negro empire in the western Archipelago. It is not necessary to the subject I am treating, that I should enquire, without minuteness, into the degree of her success, or the possibility of devising a remedy; it is sufficient that the system of waste and destruction she pursued should establish the fact, that she never expected to retain these possessions at the peace; and that it has succeeded, so far at least as to render them
of

of very inferior value to whatever power may be supposed likely to acquire them ; not only Martinico, for instance, and the other islands, which I take for granted she is ready to surrender, are diminished in their value and security, but many of our own settlements have been almost equally destroyed and corrupted ; so that it may seriously be doubted, in the present circumstances, whether those parts of the world have not lost, at least for a very long time to come, the greatest part of their original value, and consequently whether they contain the just consideration and materials of any equivalent whatsoever.

But I know not, I confess, under what tenure or security, short of the absolute union of them all under one and the same metropolitan power, they are likely to be retained, or to exist. There must not, I think, be an *analogy*, but an identity of government, if they are to remain the property of any of the states of Europe ; for I cannot perceive any prospect, or entertain the shadow of an hope that France, at any future period of time, should be inclined to prefer the preservation of those colonies which might be left to her at the peace, to the destruction of ours, which would always remain at her mercy, if we were to hold them by no better tenure than an *analogy* between the governments : particularly if it were so to happen, that

we were understood to receive out of these colonies any considerable part of our indemnity for the expences of the war, and of our equivalent for her own acquisitions in Europe. How small would be the direct and positive interest of France, in her circumscribed and diminished plantations, how subordinate and secondary to that abominable delight she might take in inflicting the severest wounds upon her rival, with so little prejudice and danger to herself ?

If the retaining, besides, of our colonies, is to depend upon an analogy in the respective governments, that analogy must make one of the reciprocal conditions in the articles of peace, and will depend upon the observation of a treaty, which it will be the interest of one of the contracting parties to violate.—For the performance of such stipulations, I apprehend no other security can possibly be devised, than an equality and reciprocity of interest in our common possessions. But this would reduce us, in that part of the world, very nearly to the *status quo* before the war, and preclude us from all possibility of finding indemnity or equivalent in the West Indies.

While I am upon this subject of *equivalent*, and to prevent the necessity of returning to it in another place, I shall take the opportunity of confessing, that I am aware of no circumstances,

stances, under the actual or relative situation of the contending parties; which ought to call this subject into discussion at all. I think it is incompatible with the honour of Great Britain; her engagements with her allies, and the peace and independence of Europe, of which she is the protector and guarantee, to admit it at all into deliberation; and that no peace, which can embrace these interests and duties, can be negotiated upon any other footing than the *status quo ante bellum*, with such indemnities to Great Britain as she is entitled to by the events of the war.

It is the general system and balance of power, for which we are contending, (though perhaps, if it is possible, still dearer and nearer interests are involved in it) it is the independence of this great commonwealth of Europe, which our arms have vindicated and asserted; and I will never admit any basis of peace, which should abandon, or compromise, or expose it. Much less could I bring myself to behold with temper or forbearance, the spectacle of the two great powers, which have attacked and defended its liberties, rearing the altar of peace upon its cinders, and dividing the spoil and plunder with a common violence, but an unequal depravity. For France would be guilty only of a crime of force, which would come home laden to the

bosom of Great Britain, with all the accumulated guilt of fraud, treachery, and perfidiousness.

When I speak of the *status quo ante bellum*, it cannot be supposed that, after so many violent shocks and convulsions, it can be replaced exactly, and in all its parts, upon its former foundations ; or that every local variation which may have taken place, every change of constitution, or of foreign connexions, is a just cause for continuing the war. Those countries, in particular, which have not been true to their own cause, whose cowardice, indifference, or treachery, is the source of their actual derangement, cannot expect their internal interests to be adopted by the generality of Europe, after the first possibility of securing the common independence by a just and secure pacification. Every thing local, every personal interest must disappear before this great and imperious necessity : a barrier must be provided against the unconquerable spirit of usurpation, and the natural predominance of France. Of this every state is convinced by a fearful experience ; the emperor in particular, who will possess those fertile and populous provinces, by an uncertain and precarious tenure, as long as they lie open to the first incursions of the republic, will hasten to repair the errors of Joseph the Second, and restore the defences of the Netherlands. The
other

other provinces of the Low Countries, to whose disorders I have alluded, if they do not shake off, by their own efforts, the yoke of the fatal connexion they have formed with so much cowardice and criminality, will thus at least be rendered an inferior and less dangerous acquisition to the usurper; and at any rate, the liberties and independence of Europe may yet be defended in another war, instead of being liable to be overwhelmed by the first armed emigrations of Frenchmen!

There is another circumstance which can scarcely escape the observations of France, namely, that notwithstanding the facility with which the loan has been made, and the lightness of the taxes, we have considerably diminished our establishments and reduced the expences, by circumscribing the operations of the war. She must have observed in the estimates for the current year a reduction of 800,000*l.* sterling, in the army alone; and if she still cherishes any hope of insurrection, she must observe, that, by the recalling of all our forces from the continent, it is scarcely possible for any of her friends to recommend that measure to the public as *prudent*, under our actual circumstances and situation.

If she entertains any sanguine expectation from the dreadful visitation of scarcity, she cannot possibly forget to observe, that this danger

is common to both countries, and nearer and greater in her own ; and that if there is a period before us, when she might take advantage of our languor and debility, it can only be upon the supposition that she herself should remain in health and vigour : all our privations and sufferings will avail her nothing, while her own are more poignant and unendurable. The carcass of France cannot come to insult the sickness of Great Britain.

But I cannot apprehend that she will ever seriously rely for any hope of extrication from her present calamities, upon the uneasiness and impatience of this country under its own. Not only because she must starve while we are upon allowance, but because the war is perhaps favourable to England in this particular, in the same degree as it is ruinous to France, by shutting her from the granaries, or intercepting the commerce of America, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. These markets are all open to England, but as soon as peace arrives, if the scarcity were to continue, she would meet a French commissary in every one of them, whom the greater necessities of his country would compel to outbid her every where, or at least to advance the price to an enormous and incalculable increase.

The corn trade at different periods of the
war,

war, has been permitted and denied to France by our fleets, which actually formed the blockade of that country ; independently of any reasons which might arise from general laws and usage, from particular treaties, or policy respecting neutral powers, it might be difficult to determine which of the alternatives, adopted at the different times I have alluded to, was the most wise and advantageous to Great Britain ; for, though her enemy has doubtless suffered many partial inconveniences and disasters by her captures, I think a more general and universal wound has been inflicted by the avarice and extortion of the neutral powers, and the interested assistance they have been permitted to lend her.

It appears certain, that not only the cargoes, freight, and insurance were regularly paid for in specie for the French consuls or commissaries, in the neutral countries, before the vessels proceeded, but that a deposit was exacted equal to the value of the ship's bottom, in case of capture or shipwreck, and of detention in the French ports : for the government was often unable to restrain the violence of the populace, and frequently, before these precautions, obliged, by its own necessities, to take similar liberties with the property of its good friends and allies.

It is almost superfluous to remark, how violently such a commerce must have drained the precious metals out of France*.—The specie of that country, from the consequences of emigration, and, probably, from the precaution and speculations of those who have not emigrated, had long since begun to ooze into all the countries of Europe; her armies, and the hazardous traffic she was forced to submit to for their maintenance, opened the dykes still wider, and the torrent has flowed without reflux or relaxation.

If I were enquiring into the causes of the almost total disappearance of the precious metals in that country, I should not forget to mention that mass of them which has returned into the bowels of the earth, which fear and danger have ingeniously concealed, which has been buried by hands now buried, and in places guarded by the silence of oblivion, and the secrecy of the tomb. But I am desirous only of

* Eschasseriaux, in his celebrated report of the 22d Brumaire, upon the state of the finances, assigns as a principle cause of their disorder, "des approvisionnemens immenses de subsistances, &c. achetés chez l'étranger pour remplir le gouffre dévorant de nos besoins." He says afterwards that "nos relations extérieures ont été ruineuses par le bouleversement du change, & par les efforts de l'étranger pour nous le rendre défavorable, &c." Same report.

remarking,

remarking, that part of her treasure, which has passed her frontier, and carried itself into other states, because I suspect, that, by the effect of the revolution in Holland, and other circumstances, it has principally concentrated itself in England, and is no small cause of that enormous depreciation of the value of money, which is the counter sign of a dearth of commodities, and gives the surface and appearance of a real scarcity and want.

It is not my design to encourage any idea that may have been entertained of exaggeration in the deficiency of the late harvests, from the interestedness and speculation of individuals. Such an opinion, though perhaps not wholly unfounded, it would be exceedingly dangerous to act upon, and to maintain the consumption in consequence, at its usual proportions, because an error in our calculation would infallibly conduct us to a sudden and absolute privation; but I think it material to observe the fall in the value of money, which makes a part of the apparent scarcity of corn, as well as of the imputed dearth of every other article of necessity or convenience.

France, however, must perceive that the scarcity in England, though exaggerated by malevolence, and assigned by ignorance exclusively to the war, is in some degree the result of the

national prosperity, of a redundancy in the quantity of the precious metals, augmented by the high credit of paper, and the opinion both of public and personal solvency; France must discern that it arises in part from the sudden influx of her own specie, from the balance of our favourable commerce with the whole world, and from our becoming the exchange, or bank, of so great a part of it; and what must be more painful and discouraging to her, after being disappointed in her hope of insurrections, from the momentary inconveniences to which this decrease in the value of money has subjected a part of the people, she must observe, that the proportion between the public debt and the national revenues is diminished and reduced by it. And if she could not behold, without concern and astonishment, the effect of the system established in 1786, and the provision for paying one per cent. interest out of the taxes themselves imposed during the war, with what sentiments must she see the silent and progressive operation of this important cause, which, while labour and wages re-establish their natural and indispensable level, will give fresh vigour and activity to industry and commerce, which operates as a direct tax upon the metals themselves, which falls with invariable justice, and even accuracy, upon every class and proportion

portion of capital, while it diminishes the mortgage of the country, and the whole mass of its debt, which no longer represent the same portion of its annual produce or industry ?

I now come to speak of the principal obstacles to peace, as they appear to me at this moment, a subject which I consider as exceedingly important to be so far explained to the public, as is consistent with political prudence, and that necessary liberty in negotiation, which makes it impossible for the King's servants to unfold themselves either with much latitude or with much precision.

Peace, it is to be observed, often chased from the earth by the passions and follies of men, is not to be won back by the first vows of returning moderation and wisdom. If it is sometimes exiled by crime and ambition, it does not always return with reason and humanity. - Such, I think, is the situation of the world at this conjuncture ; so great and general the experience and weariness of the ills of war, that *with the exception of a small band of intriguers and politicians*, peace is the universal hope, desire, and prayer of all the nations of Europe. Twenty millions of individuals invite peace daily back to France, with the piercing cries of misery, oppression, and famine, which peace alone can relieve, and which neither the fraud nor the

terror of the government can stifle or suppress. The territories of strangers offer the same vows from another description of her miserable people, with the spectacle of whose wrongs and sufferings every part of the world is filled and polluted: a proscribed and devoted class, whose extremes of fortune have rendered them so interesting to the natural sensibility and unconquerable prejudices of mankind, and who expect in peace, a period at least to the cruel hope which devours them. Peace, too, is equally desired by the enemies of France, and by those states which she holds by violence, or desolates with her perfidious fraternity. The magnanimity of Great Britain invokes peace with public vows, in which the proud misery of the government of France refuses to join. The emperor courts peace even under the mediation of a power but too friendly to France: the *possible* mediation of Spain is intercepted by the profession of pretensions so lofty and ridiculous, so vain and preposterous, that it is impossible not to perceive that these men are not only enemies to peace, but to the very name of it. Pressed to it at home by the voice, or rather by the shrieks and screams of the people, courted to it abroad by nations friendly or neutral, as well as by those which have felt the common calamity of war, and so naturally desire to return to tranquillity,

quillity, they are not afraid of opposing their unattainable ambition to the common prayers and common necessities of Europe.

It appears certain, however, that the persons possessed of authority in France possess no means of carrying on the war, but those which were employed by the committees of Robespierre; it becomes therefore in the highest degree important to enquire how far the renovation of the reign of terror might operate in this country as an obstacle to pacification. There can be no doubt that a government founded upon these cruel and abominable principles, affords to every other a just and honourable excuse for insulating it amidst the states of Europe, and refusing to hold any intercourse or communion with it; and as we already perceive this atrocious system rearing itself upon the ruins of the constitution of 1795, it appears to me to be entitled to a considerable degree of attention and reflexion, how far it may be wise, or consistent with our former declarations, to treat at this time with the French nation, should it prove unable to maintain that constitution, and relapse into all the crimes and horrors from which it seems to have emerged upon the ninth of Thermidor.

In the first place, I should imagine this system is incapable of becoming permanent; and that, during its energy, it must more quickly exhaust

exhaust and empty the country, than could be accomplished by any weaker principle, or inferior degree of violence and desolation: consequently, that France will arrive sooner at that point of depression and debility, beyond which she cannot push, and before which she will not check her desperate career. In this point of view, therefore, it seems by no means certain that the return of *terrorism* will retard the epoch of peace. But it may be thought that it will at least restore the materials of war, and enable the government of France to renew those extraordinary efforts under the first shock of which the whole continent of Europe has been so nearly crushed or overwhelmed. I am not, I confess, of this opinion; I do not entertain even this apprehension in my bosom. The whole internal state of France assures me that this fear is visionary, or at least superfluous and vain. The mighty chasms that defeat, desertion, disaffection, and the scaffold, have made in the French nation, cannot be so soon filled up; their armies cannot be recruited from those depopulated towns which they have filled with military massacres, and the very stones of which they have levelled with the earth. By the fiscal system of Robespierre, every capitalist was plundered; and if it were only from the dispersion of the same quantity of specie into a greater number of hands, it will not be so easy for the guillotine

to replenish the exchequer. In his time, and for him, the wish of Caligula seemed to have been realized, and the whole nation to have but one neck and one executioner; the present government will be forced to all the details of tyranny. It must class its victims and establish scales and measures of oppression, it must confiscate by rule, and discriminate in murder—not indeed from remorse, or tenderness, or any other sentiment of nature, but because it plunders more than one order of men, and prescribes those who have the revolutionary merit of having proscribed so many others. In truth, I am not able to perceive the rich or the riches of France; let the directory, wring a cancelled and useless paper from the vile hands enriched by the revolution,—will it pay the neutral powers who have exhausted the whole specie of the empire, and procure from them fresh fuel and materials of war? I do not think it; but it will tear from every proprietor, in every part of France, his particular possession, and accumulate every natural production or article of manufacture in the warehouses of the government. This point I have already treated; it remains for me only to observe, that the success must be various, as the tyranny is more or less intense, as the public spirit, and the human spirit, are more or less extinct or torpid in the different departments and dependencies, as the

ruin of agriculture and industry is more or less accomplished, as the destruction of the cities is more perfect or incomplete.

For these reasons, I am not inclined to apprehend so much from this system even during hostilities; and at the peace, I think it will repose in the common tomb of every forced and unnatural principle, with the rest of the misshapen progeny of the revolution. During the war it will grow weak with the weakness of the country upon which it preys, and consume itself with the materials it devours. If it rages with equal violence, it will be confined to fewer and diminishing objects; the moral evil must languish with the natural infirmity, or when the body is emaciated and bed-ridden, there will at least be little to dread from the idle frenzy of the brain, though it fancy the poor machine it agitates a hero or a god, unconquered or unconquerable.

The prevalence, therefore, of the same system in 1796 would not with me be so material an obstacle to peace as it was in 1794, if it were only because the madness of a cripple is not so formidable as that of a giant; the danger, besides, of every principle is proportioned to the force and power that support it, and to the final triumph and success that it obtains; in this point of view, it certainly cannot be dangerous to negotiate; and I should incline to think that it is

not contradictory to the spirit of any of our declarations, because the danger and contagion of principles diminishing with the force that maintains them, it cannot be their abstract existence against which we are at war, or which forms an obstacle to peace, but the degree of credit and authority they possess, and the physical power they animate and direct ; as these therefore have decayed and declined, and promise quickly to expire, I am not able to perceive any inconsistency between our conduct and our professions, even though we should treat with France under the influence of that detestable, but now impotent system.

It is a reflection painful and degrading to humanity, that a handful of stupid and brutal tyrants, just escaped from the fetters of Robespierre, should have been able to rivet them upon twenty millions of beings, and with their own necks smoking and scarred with that opprobrious yoke, enslave and bind so vast a population in chains, almost heavier than those they themselves had worn. That a contemptible band, whose little finger is heavier than the loins of Richlieu and Mazarine, with their forced loan, their taxes in kind, their requisitions, and their maximum, that is to say, by public plunder and public terror, speculating upon the cowardice and torpor of the human species, should be able to prolong

and redouble all the miseries of France, involve so many other states in protracted danger and calamities, and prevent any settlement or system being restored or established in Europe.—It is a reflection still more degrading, still more insulting, still more cruel, that these men should rely for success or impunity, not only on the depravity of their own *subjects*, but on ours; not upon the abject and passive character, which four years of successful cruelty and crimes have impressed upon Frenchmen, but upon I know not what activity and alacrity in treason and revolt, which they presume in Great Britain.

The first obstacle to peace, therefore, that I can perceive on the part of France, is the unqualified ambition of the *government*; which, in spite of their own necessities, or the inhuman alternatives of oppression, which alone remain to them, is determined to maintain the decrees for incorporating the conquests; a determination of which it is impossible to doubt, as far as depends upon them, since their rejection of the mediation of the Court of Denmark, and the internal measures of violence and desperation to which they have resorted in order to be able to carry on the war for another campaign.

Into

Into the causes of this resolution on their part it is very material to inquire; because we know by repeated or rather continued and invariable experience, that resolutions and decrees, and even fundamental articles of the constitution, are but a dead letter so soon as they cease to coincide with the wishes or interests of the persons who ought to be bound by them. The causes do not arise solely in the ambition, but grow out of the danger and embarrassments of the government. To disband their fourteen armies at once, might neither be safe for themselves, nor contribute to the internal tranquillity of a country which has long known no law but force, no morality but submission. Crimes are become mechanical in France, and five hundred thousand instruments no longer obedient to the same impulse, might fall into collision with each other, or tear the ill-jointed fabric of government into pieces. Peace too, without some order in the finances, without some revivification of the marine and of commerce, without the restoration of agriculture, or the settlement of property, (which I think can never take place so long as a single assignat remains in existence) without manufactures, without industry, without religion, without morals:—Peace, I say, without all these, may not be very desirable, may appear even dangerous, to men who have not the means of bringing back their coun-

trymen to order and peaceful arts, to honest and domestic duties, to the intercourse and habits of civilized life and society.

Peace, however, is necessary to France, because the armies that devour her demand peace themselves, and cannot be maintained without the repetition of those violent measures that make peace demanded by the people: without redoubling those oppressions which must finally produce some explosion too violent for the government to conduct or resist; an explosion which, most probably, is only suspended and delayed from the hope of being anticipated by similar calamities in London. France, has no better title to rely upon the spirit of insurrection than upon the efforts of the scarcity, nor can I think the government sincere in this expectation, however convenient it might be to their own wishes and exigencies, as well as those of the nation. Still it must be confessed, that the disturbances in London, however insignificant, the coalition of the clubs with the opposition in parliament, and the violent doctrines of some of their leaders, to which I have already alluded, with the subsequent associations recommended by persons of consequence in the Whig club, have been particularly favourable, if not to the encouragement of that hope in the government of France, at least to the propagation of it, and the consequent delusion of the people. To this, I imagine, is in

some degree to be attributed the apparent indifference with which the king's communication to parliament has been received at Paris; because, supposing the probability of insurrections in this country, it was not impossible to attribute the conciliating nature of that message to the apprehensions of the ministers, and to make it be believed, that even this measure was an indication of the approach of the commotions they expected.

I have said, I did not think the government of Paris was the dupe of the expectation they spread abroad, nor of the appearances of disturbances in England, with which they nourished the belief of it, and I will now state my reasons for entertaining that opinion. It could not have escaped the penetration, one would imagine, of the executive directory, the ministers, and the two counsels of the legislature, that the nature and temper of our parties are extremely dissimilar and distinct from their own violent and speculative divisions; that no alterations in the constitution, and in the government, no change, but a change of persons, could be seriously intended by the opposition; they must before this time have discovered, that the alliance of great peers and proprietors would moderate the eccentricity, if it added to the consistency of the societies, and abridge or diminish the velocity of their

their movement by the very weight and solidity it added to them; they must know, besides, that they could have but little assistance to expect from the union of two descriptions of persons, whose opposite principles, and contending interests, were an insuperable bar to the sincerity or duration of the contract; that it was founded upon mutual fraud and deception; and that the conditions of the alliance were a term, at which the one would never be contented to stop, and where the other would never be willing to arrive.

Certainly, through whatever medium this transaction may be considered in France, where there is an interest to colour and distort it, it requires no very great degree of perspicacity or clear sightedness to distinguish here, that no danger can possibly arise from it to the government or constitution. I mean during its lease and continuance; for at the moment of its dissolution, a real peril will arise, but which, I hope, may be as effectually guarded against, as it is easily foreseen. If the opposition, for instance, should prove the dupe in this competition of fraud and duplicity, instead of the societies; if it should finally appear, by a critical experiment, that the new leaders, instead of creating a force which they are able to regulate and controul, shall have organized a power too furious

rious for the government, and for that of the country, (the common error and miscalculation of sanguine and disappointed ambition) then there will arise a serious and imminent danger indeed ; a danger not peculiar to the king's ministers and servants, but broad and general, common to every class and description of men, though nearer to these very leaders, as they may read in the fate of Orleans and Rochefoucault, a double monument of mistaken probity and persisting depravity ; a common mirror to interested vice and speculative virtue.

Supposing, however, that I am mistaken in my conjecture of the effect this coalition, (coupled with the doctrines of a passive resistance and a prudential revolt, which followed close upon it) may operate upon the opinion of the government in France, and that they should be inclined to consider the occasion as fortunate for resuming their long-suspended, but favourite plan of *invasion* : for I wish to dissemble no species of danger or inconvenience which can possibly result from the continuance of the war, and I think every thing possible, both to despair and to enthusiasm : I am so far from apprehending that they would derive any assistance from this coalition in that case, that I am persuaded it would be the precise cause of its immediate dissolution. Besides that they would meet great, and I think, insurmountable

insurmountable difficulties upon the sea, and even before they could embark upon it ; they would not find the moment particularly opportune or propitious, when the kingdom is full of disciplined and experienced troops, and of militia and provincial forces, that may be compared with them in almost every respect, without injury or disparagement. They cannot be ignorant that the dangers of England have always united all her parties ; they cannot think opposition more formidable to government at this crisis, than when half the present servants of his majesty were to be numbered with it ; nor forget, that those very dangers were the cause of giving so much weight and consistency to administration, by withdrawing the most powerful and respectable individuals from the ranks of the minority.

For my own part, I confess that it has fallen lot to know the opinion pretty generally entertained in foreign countries of the corruption and depravity of our parties, and to know that it is exaggerated and mistaken. There is something in our national character and disposition, which commonly corrects and qualifies the vilest passions and tendencies, and extracts or tempers the worst poisons that circulate in our blood. Faction and civil war itself, have been found temperate evils in this climate

o what they have proved under other skies ; and the experience we have had of them, has enabled us to prepare and provide from afar, against their return or contagion. If we except the rebellions, on account of the disputed succession, which arose from a false sense of honour and a mistaken duty, the whole empire, since the period of the revolution, has been united upon every occasion of danger or necessity, and no part or party can claim any merit in the respect, or pre-eminence over the rest ; we are loud and noisy in the out-posts, but when the body of the place is attacked or exposed, we forget our divisions, and form the common garrison of our country.

Neither can it have escaped, I imagine, the penetration of the French ministry, that the harangues and motions of the opposition for peace, are not more likely to be sincere, than they are to prevail ; for they, no doubt, whatever we may do at home, consider an opposition as a *possible administration*, and enquire not only into what they say, but what they would do, and what they must do, if they were trusted with the government. They may possibly believe, that if Mr. Fox had been in power at the beginning of the year 1793, he would have sent an ambassador to demand reparation for the violation of the treaties ; they may possibly believe,



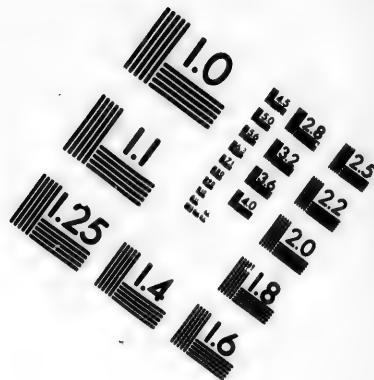
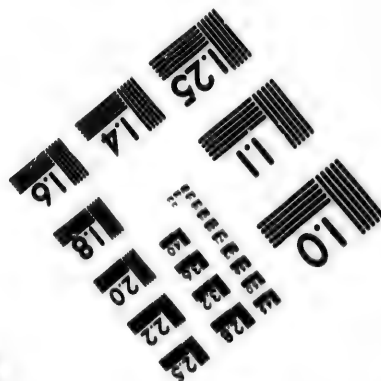
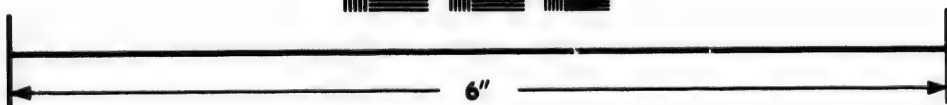
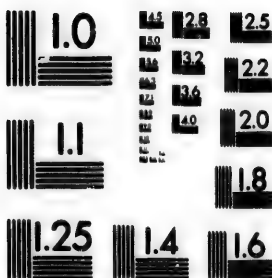


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



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that he might have dissembled his horror at the murder of the royal family, and accepted satisfaction for the conspiracy into which the convention had entered with our own traitors, to subvert the throne and the constitution : they may believe it possible, that if Mr. Fox had been minister, the war might have broken out six months later ; or to set no limits to credulity, they might believe, that if Mr. Fox had been minister, we should still have been at peace.—But if they had faith for all this ; if they could submit their reason to all these dogmas of opposition, it would not follow that they should believe also, that if Mr. Fox were the minister in 1796, after the contrary of all these suppositions had taken place, he would submit to the decree of the convention, and dismantle the fleets of England, while France incorporated Savoy, the Netherlands, and all the left bank of the Rhine. They need not believe, because Mr. Fox had once wished for peace, that he would therefore throw away all the advantages of the war ; that he would forget our conquests in the East, or the victory of the first of June, 1794, the destruction of half the French navy in the harbours of Toulon : they would not believe that Mr. Fox, any more than Mr. Pitt, or any one Englishman more than another, would submit to the preliminaries they exact, or come to a negotiation till France had repealed her decree ; nay, I will

go further, because it is necessary to expose fully the expectations and reliances of that government; and I will say, that if that decree had been any thing else, in their own estimation, than an obstacle and barrier to every species of negotiation, which, of all things is uppermost in their apprehension, they would never have suffered it to pass, or would have repealed it with a precipitation greater than that with which they passed it: for, if the state of the nations at war had been reversed, and, instead of France, England had been ruined and exhausted; if there were no power in Europe upon foot to repress the usurpations of France, and it were clear that she must, *de facto*, extend herself to the Rhine, what would be the end or advantage of maintaining this proud and vain-glorious decree?—Would it not rather remove the term, and endanger the event of that ambitious peace, which she would otherwise have the certainty of concluding, by humiliating and exasperating her enemies, by driving them to incalculable efforts of thoughtless and unmeasurable despair? Can they think, then, that England, entire and untouched, will crouch to those conditions at the feet of her emaciated enemy, which, in the vigour and fullness of his health, she would not have accepted even upon her death-bed? that she is
so

so insensible to the attractions of victory, if she were unmindful of every thing else, as to submit to an insolent law of the enemy, which, in defeat and ruin, she would have resisted? or that she will abandon her honour amidst the shouts of triumph, which she would have defended amidst the cries of desperation?—No, believe me, the government of France cannot swallow this mysterious creed; they are not the dupes of this unreasonable and implicit faith, calculated only for the political methodists of the day, for the illuminated commonwealth of Mary-le-bone fields.—Carnot and Lepeau are not amongst these true believers; they neither expect the cession of Gibraltar, nor the circumscription of our marine, nor the repeal of the navigation act, nor the surrender of the Netherlands, nor the dereliction of our allies, from *this* administration, nor from *that*; all they require or expect of their friends in England, is to disturb and embarrass the government, and protract the war; a service very faithfully rendered, and, I have no doubt, very honourably paid for; and to give appearances of dissension and approaching revolt, sufficient to enable them to dupe and deceive their own people into a perseverance, under this hope, which, without it, would be impracticable or desperate.

The government of France too must have
taken

taken into consideration, in any estimate they were forming upon the probability of assistance from the societies, in case of invasion, that material point which I have already discussed, the absolute disgrace and extinction of the revolutionary principles which might have rendered such an expectation less unreasonable at the beginning of the year 1793; they must know that as those principles have been unfolded and discredited, the danger of commotions, and the danger in commotions, have subsided along with them, and they must be dissuaded by their own friends in those bodies from so hopeless and fatal an experiment.

Though the desires, the ambition, and even the embarrassments of the new government, seem to prescribe perseverance on the part of France, it does not therefore appear that they can long find the means of perseverance at home, or that they can seriously rely upon any assistance, or upon any event very favourable to their interests in this country. This obstacle to peace therefore being nothing more than the personal obstinacy of the individuals in power, must yield to the current of events, and the necessities of the empire.

So well convinced does that government appear of the compulsion that awaits it, and of the necessity not only of renouncing the conquests,
but

but of paying an indemnity to the powers at war, if it were to come to a negotiation, that it artfully throws all the conditions of peace into preliminaries, and exacts a previous assent, which would take away all occasion of discussion. This policy, however, at best weak and short-sighted, was desperate even at the time when their armies were triumphant in Germany; experience has doubtless undeceived the cabinet of France, if it ever really imagined that Europe would be frightened out of its liberties, and the Rhine be taken as it had taken Condé and Valenciennes, *by a decree of the Convention*: it must know, that this decree, as long as it exists, can have no effect, operation, or influence upon the conditions of peace, and maintain it only to render peace impossible, which, either from personal danger, or political fears, it considers it as a misfortune to itself, or to France.

The decrees, therefore, are not so much an obstacle to peace, as to negotiation, because, being wholly unfounded and unauthorised by the power, situation, and resources of France, they must necessarily fall at once, and without discussion, whenever that government wishes to have peace. Another obstacle to peace is, the indemnity of Great Britain, which will be less palatable to France, than the surrender of her precarious authority in the low countries. It is fortunate for her,

her, that she has a pledge in the magnanimity of this country, and in the personal character of the government, that it will not delay the repose and tranquillity of Europe, by exacting a rigorous justice, and retaliating upon her avarice and ambition. It is fortunate for France, that the moderation of her enemies will not pervert the successes of this war, to the attainment of any other objects than those for which it was undertaken, or direct the superiority of their arms, to any other end, than the vindication of the treaties, and the restoration of the balance of power.

Were it otherwise—but I repress myself ; let her tremble to think, after the calamities of her military marine, after the extinction of her commerce, after the ruin of her finance, after the depopulation of her empire ; let her tremble to think, what her case would be, if with four hundred ships of war, with a commerce encreased, with an exuberance of resources, with a population untouched, and a constitution invigorated and endeared, Great Britain, in her turn, should remove the barriers, or violate the system of Europe ; if, at the conferences for a peace, it were to be discussed, whether, after having been, during more than a century in danger of being enslaved by the natural preponderance of France, and, during the last years of being corrupted and annihilated

annihilated in all its political relations, by the arts
 and malevolence of that restless country, by the
 overflow of its inhabitants, the universality of
 its language, and by a French faction in every
 state; I say, whether it were not just, expedient,
 and necessary to the future welfare and tranquil-
 lity of this part of the globe, to provide for its se-
 curity, by circumscribing her territory, and re-
 storing the ancient boundaries of her empire?
 Let her tremble to think, if she were to render
 back all the usurpations of the last century,
 which justice might prescribe, and her weakness
 suffer, what limits would be those of France?
 how different from the Alps, the Pyrenees, the
 Rhine, and the Meuse?—I repress myself.—
 But France herself, if ever that country can be
 grateful, will one day own the obligation as all
 Europe besides does now. It is indeed glorious,
 after having stood in the breach for civilized so-
 ciety; having repressed the torrent of enlighten-
 ed barbarism, which threatened to overwhelm
 our arts, institutions, manners, and religion, and
 preserved the social order upon its ancient basis—
 to restore the dyke, and rebuild the column:
 and with every thing in our power, to demand
 no more than the post of honour, and the means
 of rendering the same service, upon the recur-
 rence of the same necessity.

This, I am persuaded, will be evident in the
 terms of peace, which I have no scruple to say

must and will be dictated by Great Britain. She will not abandon her allies for individual advantage, nor accept an equivalent for the usurpations of her enemies ; and the decline of the colonies with the seeds of a negro empire in the West-Indies, will, in spite of the conquests she may retain, render her a loser in that part of the world. She will seek her true and certain indemnity, not in the arbitrary conditions, but in the firmness and security of an honourable peace ; and this *Power of the third order*, will not forget, at a moment when every thing seems attainable to her ambition, that she is the mistress-nation, not by the extent of her territory and resources, by a predominance of population, or a *natural superiority over all Europe together*, but by her public and private virtues ; her justice and moderation ; her arts and industry ; her laws and regulated liberty ; her temperate courage ; her unassuming wisdom, and that moral greatness which she opposes to every danger, and to the seductions of victory itself,

THE END.